

VZCZCXRO5479
PP RUEHMR
DE RUEHMR #0158/01 0881106
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P R 291106Z MAR 06
FM AMEMBASSY MASERU
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 1968
INFO RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEHMR/AMEMBASSY MASERU 2234

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 MASERU 000158

SIPDIS

SIPDIS

FOR AF/S

E.O. 12958: DECL: 3/28/2016
TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [ETRD](#) [KDEM](#) [LT](#)
SUBJECT: TOUR D'HORIZON WITH NEW LCD SECRETARY GENERAL

REF: (A) MASERU 157 (B) MASERU 143 (C) MASERU 124

CLASSIFIED BY: JUNE CARTER PERRY, AMBASSADOR, EXEC, STATE.
REASON: 1.4 (b), (d)

Summary

1. (C) With preparations for 2007 national elections moving apace, Ambassador engaged Lesotho's Trade Minister (Mpho Malie) in a review of internal political developments as well as regional and bilateral issues. Malie, as the ruling Lesotho Congress for Democracy's (LCD) new Secretary-General, gave a detailed account of party tensions leading up to the January shooting of Foreign Minister Moleleki. Contrary to published reports of his stance citing that act as "criminal," Malie, in our March 24 exchange, pointed to political discontent as the basis. We emphasized the pressing need for a peaceful electoral process. On economic/trade matters, Malie discussed progress on Lesotho's Millennium Challenge proposal and alerted us to his planned April 4 meeting on the SACU/FTA (in South Africa). Concerning Article 98, Malie (who had been asked by the Prime Minister to work with MFA on draft language) promised to follow up with the GOL Attorney General's office on the matter. End Summary.

Internal Tensions Within the LCD

2. (C) Malie recounted the circumstances culminating, it seems, in the attack on Foreign Minister Moleleki in January. In his capacity as Secretary-General of the LCD, Malie said he had insisted during the January party congress on amendments to the body's constitution. Especially contentious was the Amendments Committee's decision to limit membership on the youth wing's executive committee to those under age 35. Several members were well over age 35 and objected strenuously to the new rule. The Maseru branch of the party was especially rebellious, according to Malie. Members called amendments the "Moleleki amendments" as he was chairing the group. Dissident members were raucous, per Malie, and made a bonfire of the documents. Malie believed the roots of dissatisfaction were so intense, renegade party members took out their anger on the FOMIN. He characterized the FOMIN as still shaken by the assault; his current trip to Dubai with his wife was a vacation intended to mollify the effects of the trauma. (Note: In a public statement, Malie had initially called the assault a criminal matter. End Note.) Media allegations of a second (but failed) attack were dismissed as "journalistic imagination" by Malie.

3. (C) Ambassador queried Malie about the LCD's efforts to restrain violence among these elements and to respond to opposition parties in an evenhanded manner with the national elections approaching. Westressed the importance of insuring

free, fair and peaceful elections. Malie responded that he was committed to order and had already "disciplined" certain party members. He welcomed U.S. and international community support and said he hoped to meet with an NDI representative in country to initiate pre-electoral planning. (Comment: Ambassador has invited NDI and IRI to consider appropriate programming in Lesotho as preparations for the 2007 national elections begin. End Comment.) The Minister acknowledged that how the country managed the elections was crucial to future economic and social development. Assuming the SADC co-chair next year adds to Lesotho's determination to achieve a positive outcome.

SACU / Free Trade Agreement / Millennium Challenge

14. (C) We asked Malie his views as one of Lesotho's most perceptive officials and as a firm supporter of the U.S. position re the SACU/FTA talks. The Minister considered the talks "on hold." He believed time and support had been lost due to changes in South Africa's cabinet. Malie shared his opinion that former South African Trade Minister Erwin and his team were easier to deal with in the past. Malie plans to meet with South African officials the first week in April and express the GOL's wish to pursue the SACU/FTA. Concerning Lesotho's Millennium Challenge proposal now being drafted, Minister Malie highlighted inclusion of range management as part of the proposal. We observed that several years ago USG had funded research and recommendations on this important aspect of development given severe soil erosion and unfettered roaming by cattle. Those findings, which included fencing, were not fully developed in the past. Malie asserted that the current government wanted to move forward now and take steps to address the problem. Ambassador encouraged Malie as a key member of the interministerial committee on the MCA to complete a comprehensive proposal as soon as possible over the next few weeks so MCC teams could begin their reviews.

MASERU 00000158 002 OF 002

Article 98

15. (SBU) With Malie as one of the officials tasked by Prime Minister Mosisili to handle proposed Article 98 language, Ambassador informed the Minister that the draft was still under review in the Attorney General's office. Malie said he would press the AG to move forward.

Comment

16. (C) Malie is one of the most level-headed and pragmatic officials in the GOL. He is a valuable interlocutor with the USG and his broad experience at Doha, Hong Kong and other sites of global trade meetings has earned him a good reputation. His assumption of the LCD leadership role is timely and ought to serve the country well in the electoral run-up. Malie's analysis of the FOMIN's situation matches that of Moleleki's sister-in-law (a well known doctor) who also told us that being in the political spotlight had historically resulted in disturbances before major elections. Secretary-General Malie's firm hand and openness to international community assistance should leaven potential eruptions. His voice in the regional trade fora may help advance USG objectives regarding SADC and SACU as well as serve bilateral interests in development and security matters. End Comment
PERRY